

Remarks

Favorable reconsideration of this application, in view of the above amendments and in light of the following remarks and discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 17-26 are currently pending in the application; Claims 17, 20, 21, and 24 having been amended, and new independent Claims 25 and 26 having been added, by way of the present response. Applicants respectfully assert that support for the changes to the claims is self-evident from the originally filed disclosure, including the original claims, and that therefore no new matter has been added.

In the outstanding Office Action Claims 17-24 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,138,331 to Powers. Applicants respectfully request that that rejection of the claims be withdrawn for the following reasons.

Initially, Applicants express thanks for the courtesies extended by Examiner Jackson to Applicants' representative during a personal interview on October 12, 2004. Applicants have amended the claims to recite features which Examiner Jackson indicated might be more favorably treated. In accordance with MPEP § 713.04, Applicants respectfully assert that the following discussion, with the Interview Summary prepared by Examiner Jackson at the conclusion of the interview, sets forth the substance of the interview.

The present invention is directed to seat belt covers. Independent Claim 17 recites an outside beltlike member having a top end, a bottom end disposed away from the top end along a longitudinal axis, and first and second connecting edges disposed between the top and bottom ends and disposed opposite one another. A left beltlike submember is connected to the first connecting edge. A right beltlike submember is adapted to form a partially closed volume with the outside beltlike member and the left beltlike submember. The right beltlike submember has a bottom end and a top end. The bottom end of the right beltlike submember is connected to the second connecting edge of the outside beltlike member at a bottom

connecting point disposed a non-zero distance away from the bottom end of the outside beltlike member. The top end of the right beltlike submember is connected to the second connecting edge of the outside beltlike member adjacent the top end of the outside beltlike member at a top connecting point. A distance between the longitudinal axis and the top connecting point being less than a distance between the longitudinal axis and the bottom connecting point. The seat belt cover moves relative to the seat belt when the seat belt is wound and unwound.

Independent Claim 21 recites an outside beltlike member having outside top and bottom ends, and connecting and fastening edges. The outside top end is disposed away from the outside bottom end along a longitudinal axis, and the outside connecting and fastening edges extend between the outside top and bottom ends and are disposed away from one another. An inside beltlike member has inside top and bottom ends, and connecting and fastening edges. The inside top end is disposed away from the inside bottom end, and the inside connecting and fastening edges extend between the inside top and bottom ends and are disposed away from one another. The inside connecting edge is connected with the outside connecting edge, and the inside fastening edge is adapted to removably fasten with the outside fastening edge to form a partially closed volume. A distance between the longitudinal axis and the outside connecting edge adjacent the outside top end is less than a distance between the longitudinal axis and the outside connecting edge adjacent the outside bottom end. The seat belt cover moves relative to the seat belt when the seat belt is wound and unwound.

Powers is directed to a release resistant seat belt buckle cover. As shown in Figure 5, for example, of Powers, a buckle cover 22 includes a first side 28, a second side 30, and a connector 32.

Independent Claim 17 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Powers. Applicants respectfully assert that Powers does not teach or render obvious the claimed invention recited in independent Claim 17.

Specifically, as discussed during the interview, Applicants respectfully assert that Powers does not teach or render obvious the claimed features of a seat belt cover including a bottom end of a right beltlike submember connected to a connecting edge of an outside beltlike member at a bottom connecting point, and a top end of the right beltlike submember connected to the connecting edge of the outside beltlike member at a top connecting point, a distance between a longitudinal axis of the outside beltlike member and the top connecting point being less than a distance between the longitudinal axis and the bottom connecting point, as recited in independent Claim 17. Specifically, Powers does not show or state the second side 30 (e.g., a right submember) connected to the connector 32 (e.g., an outside member) at a top connecting point (for example, in Figure 5 an upper end of the second side 30) and a bottom connecting point (for example, a lower end of the second side 30), where a distance between a longitudinal axis of the connector 32 and the top connecting point is less than a distance between the axis and the bottom connecting point. Rather, the figures of Powers, including Figure 5, only show that along an entire length of the connection between the second side 30 and the connector 32, distances from a longitudinal axis are the same.

As also discussed during the interview, Applicants respectfully assert that Powers does not teach or render obvious the claimed features of a bottom end of a right beltlike submember connected to a second connecting edge of an outside beltlike member at a bottom connecting point disposed a non-zero distance away from the bottom end of the outside beltlike member. Specifically, Powers does not show or state a bottom end of the second side 30 (e.g., a right submember) connected to a bottom end of the connector 32 (e.g., an outside member) at a bottom connecting point (for example, in Figure 5 a lower end of the second

side 30) disposed a non-zero distance (e.g., offset from) the bottom end of the connector 32. Rather, the figures of Powers, including Figure 5, only show that a bottom end of the second side 30 is connected to the bottom end of the connector 32 at the bottom connecting point disposed at the bottom end of the connector 32.

As still further discussed during the interview, Applicants respectfully assert that Powers does not teach or render obvious the claimed features of the seat belt cover moving relative to the seat belt when the seat belt is wound and unwound, as recited in independent Claim 17. Specifically, Powers is directed to a release resistant seat belt buckle cover that is not intended to move on a seat belt, but rather can and will remain with the buckle to inhibit or prevent untimely release of a seat belt.¹ In fact, when used for its indicated purpose the release resistant seat belt buckle cover of Powers is stationary and covers the seat belt buckle. It is specifically designed to remain over the buckle so that it cannot be untimely released. This is not the present invention and cannot suggest the present inventive seat belt cover which, by its very design, moves on the seat belt.

Applicants respectfully assert that Powers cannot provide advantages provided by the seat belt cover recited in independent Claim 17. By way of specific non-limiting examples, Applicants note that because the claimed seat belt cover moves on the seat belt, such that when the seat belt is unused (e.g., when wound up on a retractor), the claimed cover can receive a through-tongue of the seat belt so that the claimed cover is not disposed between the retractor and the tongue. Thus, the claimed seat belt cover can be prevented from becoming crushed or taking on a bellows-like configuration, and can be prevented from impeding the seat belt from being completely retracted.²

Thus, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of independent Claim 17 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) be withdrawn and the independent claim allowed.

¹ Column 1, lines 17-37.

² Page 2, lines 11-20, of Applicants' originally filed specification.

Claim 21 also stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) over Powers. For reasons similar to those discussed above, Applicants respectfully assert that Powers does not teach or render obvious the claimed features of a seat belt cover including an inside connecting edge of an inside beltlike member connected with an outside connecting edge of an outside beltlike member, a distance between a longitudinal axis of the outside beltlike member and the outside connecting edge adjacent an outside top end of the outside beltlike member less than a distance between the longitudinal axis and the outside connecting edge of the outside beltlike member adjacent an outside bottom end on the outside beltlike member, and the seat belt cover moving relative to the seat belt when the seat belt is wound and unwound, as recited in the independent claim.

Thus, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of independent Claim 21 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) be withdrawn and the independent claim allowed.

Applicants respectfully assert that Claims 18-20 and 22-24 are allowable for the same reasons as the independent claims from which they depend, as well as for their own features. Thus, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of dependent Claims 18-20 and 22-24 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) be withdrawn and the dependent claims allowed.

Applicants further respectfully assert that new independent Claim 25, as well as Claim 26 depending therefrom, is allowable for reasons similar to those of independent Claims 17 and 20. Thus, Applicants respectfully request the allowance of Claims 25 and 26.

Consequently, in view of the present amendment, no further issues are believed to be outstanding in the present application, and the present application is believed to be in condition for formal Allowance. A Notice of Allowance for Claims 17-26 is earnestly solicited.

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Should the Examiner deem that any further action is necessary to place this application in even better form for allowance, the Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned representative at the below listed telephone number.

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Respectfully submitted,

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